



The journey in to solid-fuel (charcoal, coal briquettes and wood) barbecue can be a steep and somewhat frustrating learning curve, but there are a handful of essentials that will greatly lessen that curve. In this article, I will share some of those tips to get your barbecue on track.



### #1 - QUALITY CHARCOAL & PROPERLY SEASONED SMOKING WOOD

Not all coal and wood is created equally and for the most part the adage of “you get what pay for” rings true. There are plenty of options on the market, but I have found from decades of barbecue’ing to be wary of the “cheap” options. In my opinion, some brands to look for when selecting fuel are the imported Heatbeads Briquettes and Lump, Samba Competition Lump and Cocoshots and the New Zealand made Urban Lumberjack Smoking Wood and Manuka Wood Supplies Lump & Wood Splits. Not only are they consistent in size and flavours that they impart to your barbecue, and locally sourced but also created through sustainable processes.





## #2 - CHARCOAL STARTER CHIMNEYS

enable you to get your coals glowing and up to cooking temperature with minimal fuss and time. Simply put your desired amount of coal into the chimney with a heat source from underneath (in order of preference - scrunched-up newspaper, natural fire lighters or for the real deal a flame wand) to ignite the coals.

Depending on the type of fuel and what you use to start the coals, it can take anywhere from just a few minutes to around 20 minutes to get them glowing hot, ashed-over and ready to hit the grill. Chimneys are available from specialty barbecue shops and most chain stores. My advice is, if budget allows, a stainless steel Pro-Q chimney - they are built to last.

## #3 - FLAME WAND CHARCOAL IGNITERS

After spending literally hours and hours starting charcoal chimneys with scrunched-up newspaper and waiting for the coals to be ready, a game-changer happened along a few xmas mornings ago, when I was gifted a Barbecue BOI - Fire Boi Charcoal Igniter. These attach to any LPG gas bottle and provide an almost instant solution to starting up your barbecue. Turn the gas on, fire up the igniter with a push of a button, squeeze the throttle lever, aim the flame at the coals (from underneath the chimney is best) and in just a minute or two you are done and ready to cook.

## #4 - INSTANT READ MEAT THERMOMETERS

have been an absolute game changer. Simple to operate and provide an instant snap-shot of how your barbecue or indeed any cooking that you are doing is progressing.



Readings from instant read thermometers not only provide an indication of "doneness" but also ensures that food safety temperatures are adhered to. Simply a must!

## #5 - QUALITY MEAT

that has the characteristics required for the barbecue you are undertaking is probably the most important factor when wanting to up your cooking game. My advice when starting out, is to get to know your local butcher and discuss the proteins that you are wanting to cook. For example, if you are wanting to cook a brisket there are things to look for such as marbling (inter-muscular fats), grass or grain feed, whether it is a point, flat or full-packer, hard fats to meat ratio and overall appearance. Primal barbecue cuts are no longer in the realms of "cheap", so purchasing a great vs mediocre cut at the same \$s per kilogram will greatly improve the result.



Above are my Top 5 Barbecue Essential Tips, there are many more to learn along the way and a great resource for kiwis starting out is joining the NZ Barbecue Alliance on Facebook. Use the search function and ask questions. The community is supportive and has a "no dumb questions" mantra, also feel free to reach out directly via email ([events@barbecuelife.co.nz](mailto:events@barbecuelife.co.nz)).

**WITH WINTER APPROACHING REMEMBER "BARBECUE IS NOT A SEASON"**

**UNTIL NEXT TIME**